

Ten Ways to Cope with Holiday Grief

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1. PLAN AHEAD AS TO WHERE AND HOW YOU WILL SPEND YOUR TIME DURING THE HOLIDAYS. LET YOURSELF SCALE BACK ON ACTIVITIES IF YOU WANT TO. REDEFINE YOUR HOLIDAY EXPECTATIONS. THIS CAN BE A TRANSITION YEAR TO BEGIN NEW TRADITIONS AND LET OTHERS GO.
2. SELECT A CANDLE IN YOUR LOVED ONE'S FAVORITE COLOR AND SCENT. PLACE IT IN A SPECIAL AREA OF YOUR HOME AND LIGHT IT AT SIGNIFICANT TIMES THROUGHOUT THE HOLIDAYS, SIGNIFYING THE LIGHT OF THE LOVE THAT LIVES ON IN YOUR HEART.
3. GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS. IF YOU FEEL AN URGE TO CRY, LET THE TEARS FLOW.THEY ARE HEALING. SCIENTISTS HAVE DISCOVERED THAT CERTAIN BRAIN CHEMICALS IN OUR TEARS ARE NATURAL PAIN RELIEVERS.
4. SHAKESPEARE ONCE SAID, "GIVE SORROW WORDS ..." WRITE AN "UN-SENT LETTER" TO YOUR LOVED ONE EXPRESSING WHAT YOU ARE HONESTLY FEELING TOWARD HIM OR HER AT THIS MOMENT. AFTER YOU COMPOSE THE LETTER, YOU MAY DECIDE TO PLACE IT IN A BOOK, ALBUM OR DRAWER IN YOUR HOME, LEAVE IT AT THE MEMORIAL SITE, THROW IT AWAY, OR EVEN BURN IT AND LET THE ASHES RISE SYMBOLICALLY.
5. WHEN YOU ARE ESPECIALLY MISSING YOUR LOVED ONE, CALL FAMILY MEMBERS OR DEAR FRIENDS AND SHARE YOUR FEELINGS. IF THEY KNEW HER/HIM, CONSIDER ASKING THEM TO SHARE SOME MEMORIES OF TIMES THEY RECALL.
6. IF YOU LIVE WITHIN DRIVING DISTANCE OF THE CEMETERY, DECORATE THE MEMORIAL SITE WITH A HOLIDAY THEME. THIS COULD INCLUDE FLOWERS, GARLANDS, RIBBONS, BOWS, EVERGREEN BRANCHES, PACKAGES, PINECONES OR A MINIATURE CHRISTMAS TREE. DECORATING THE SITE YOURSELF CAN BE HELPFUL IN REMEMBERING AND CELEBRATING YOUR LOVED ONE'S LIFE DURING THE HOLIDAYS.
7. PLAY MUSIC THAT IS COMFORTING AND MEANINGFUL TO YOU. TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO CLOSE YOUR EYES AND FEEL THE MUSIC WITHIN THE CENTER OF YOUR BEING.
8. GIVE MONEY YOU WOULD HAVE SPENT FOR GIFTS FOR YOUR ABSENT LOVED ONE TO A CHARITY IN YOUR FAMILY MEMBER'S NAME. CONSIDER DONATING MONEY TO THE PUBLIC LIBRARY TO BUY A PARTICULAR BOOK. HAVE THE BOOK DEDICATED TO YOUR LOVED ONE'S MEMORY. BUY A PRESENT FOR A CHILD WHO WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE A GIFT DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON.
9. READ A BOOK OR ARTICLE ON GRIEF. SOME SUGGESTIONS: DON'T TAKE MY GRIEF AWAY FROM ME BY DOUG MANNING, THE COMFORT BOOK FOR WHOSE WHO MOURN, COMPILED BY ANNA TRIMIEW, AND A GRIEF OBSERVED, BY C.S.LEWIS.
10. REMEMBER THE REALITY THAT THE ANTICIPATION OF THE HOLIDAYS WITHOUT YOUR FAMILY MEMBER IS OFTEN HARDER THAN THE ACTUAL HOLIDAYS THEMSELVES.

You have the right this holiday to...

- NOT ATTEND GET-TOGETHERS THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO ATTEND
- CHANGE HOW YOU "CELEBRATE" THE HOLIDAY
- NOT DECORATE AT ALL
- DECORATE EVERY INCH THAT YOU CAN
- SAY "TIME OUT" ANYTIME YOU NEED TO
- TALK ABOUT YOUR LOVED ONE DURING CONVERSATIONS, EVEN IF IT MAKES OTHER PEOPLE UNCOMFORTABLE
- FORGET ABOUT EVERYTHING YOU SHOULD BE DOING AND JUST BE
- TELL PEOPLE HOW YOU ARE REALLY DOING WHEN THEY ASK
- BE SAD OR MAD OR LONELY OR SILLY OR HOWEVER YOU FEEL AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT
- HAVE SOME "BAH HUMBUG" DAYS
- HAVE FUN WITHOUT FEELING GUILTY
- SPEND TIME WITH PEOPLE WHO HELP YOU FEEL BETTER, EVEN IF THEY'RE NOT FAMILY
- CHANGE YOUR MIND (3 TIMES IN 5 MINUTES IF YOU NEED TO)
- CRY
- LAUGH
- LAUGH AND CRY AT THE SAME TIME...DAILY
- LEAVE EARLY IF IT GETS TOO HARD
- CANCEL AT THE LAST MINUTE IF YOU CAN'T BEAR TO GO
- DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE ELSE BECAUSE IT FEELS GOOD
- DO IT ALL DIFFERENTLY NEXT YEAR

REMEMBER RULE OF 60%!

WHEN YOU HAVE HAD 60% OF WHAT YOU CAN HANDLE AT A SOCIAL EVENT, WRAP IT UP AND LEAVE. DON'T WAIT TILL YOU ARE 100% READY TO GO. GRIEVING TAKES ENERGY, AND GRIEVING DURING THE HOLIDAYS DEMANDS A LOT OF ENERGY. BEING WITH PEOPLE, EVEN THOSE YOU LOVE, REQUIRES ENERGY THAT IS IN SHORT SUPPLY. IF YOU OVER-DO AND STAY TOO LONG, YOU WILL BE OVERLY-TIRED FOR DAYS AFTERWARDS. BE COMPASSIONATE TO YOURSELF AND LEAVE EARLY RATHER THAN LATE!